

Leonid Poberezhskiy's Grandfather Itsko Shehtman



Itsko Shehtman, my grandfather, on the right. Moscow rabbi on the left.

My mother's father Itsko Shehtman was born in 1872. I don't know where he was born. My grandfather studied in cheder and then he finished Yeshiva. He had been married by that time. They lived in Dashev. After finishing Yeshiva my grandfather was a rabbi in Uman for some time. After the revolution my grandfather refused to be the rabbi. He decided to take to a more useful activity as he used to say. I don't know exactly what he took to. He was always dressed in the same type of clothes. He always wore a black jacket and a black hat. My grandfather didn't wear paces and he had a long beard. His mother tongue was Yiddish. He spoke Russian slowly and with a strong Jewish accent.

After moving to Kiev my grandfather led his customary way of life. There was a synagogue in Schekavitskaya Street in Podol (it's still there). My grandfather often went to the synagogue. They observed Sabbath and celebrated Jewish holidays at home. I remember Pessah very vividly. The whole family got together at the table, besides Uncle Syunia. He was a communist and avoided staying with us on such days, he left home or based in the room, but never sat with us for the table. But my parents, Tsylia and Abram did not mind celebration of these holidays. My grandmother cooked traditional Jewish meals: stuffed fish and goose neck and strudel with jam and nuts, (I do not know whether this was kosher food but it tasted delicious). There were no prayers or singing cantos at the table; this was just getting together at the dinner table. My grandmother was a great cook. I have never had clear soup as delicious as my grandmother could make it. There was always matsa in the house. This was our tribute to the tradition, as we usually ate a lot of bread in the house. I understand this religious surrounding was mostly arranged for my grandfather. Even when I became a pioneer and an ardent atheist I still enjoyed sitting at the festive table with my family.